

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS  
OF THE UNITED STATES

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS)  
WATER AND POWER AUTHORITY PETITION )  
FOR ELECTRIC SYSTEM RATE RELIEF ) PSC DOCKET No. 678

**PUBLIC HEARING**

Before: KYE WALKER, ESQ., Hearing Examiner  
Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2019  
Location: Public Services Commission  
Barbel Plaza  
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands  
Time: 5:43 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT:

Donald Cole, Executive Director  
Tisean Hendricks, PSC  
Lorna Nichols, Public Officer

REPORTED BY:

Desiree D. Hill, RMR  
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## P R O C E E D I N G S

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HEARING EXAMINER: We're going to start the public hearing portion of the base rate proceeding. So my name is Kye Walker. I am the hearing examiner that was appointed by the PSC to conduct the investigation of the base rate case. So what we're going to do is we have circulated a sign-up sheet for anyone who wants to testify. I understand sometimes during the hearing you may change your mind and decide you actually want to testify. If you want to do that, please let Ms. Hendricks right here know and she'll bring the sheet up to you.

We're going to go in order of the sign-in sheet. So what will happen, every testifier will sit here, and the reason that the testifier will sit here is so that the stenographer could record everything that the testifier says. The reason for that is that the testimony that we receive this evening will be made a part of the official record of the base rate case to be considered by myself, and I will be providing a report and recommendations to the PSC and the PSC would also have the opportunity to review the record as well.

1       It looks like we may have run out of chairs.  If  
2       anyone would like to sit down that's currently  
3       standing, they could sit along this side.  Each  
4       testifier is allotted five-minutes to testify.  In  
5       addition to the oral testimony, we're also  
6       accepting written testimony to be submitted by  
7       5:00 p.m. this Friday.

8               MR. SMITH:  Can I ask a question of the  
9       executive director?

10              HEARING EXAMINER:  Pertaining to the  
11       public hearing?

12              MR. SMITH:  Pertaining to why we're in  
13       this small room.  You knew a lot of people were  
14       coming, so why you didn't put us in a bigger room?

15              HEARING EXAMINER:  I don't want to delay  
16       the hearing.  This is where we are tonight.  And  
17       of course at this time we won't be changing the  
18       room.  So if you would feel more comfortable  
19       sitting up here --

20              MR. SMITH:  I am concerned about the small  
21       room.

22              HEARING EXAMINER:  Understood.

23              MR. SMITH:  You're welcome.

24              HEARING EXAMINER:  We would begin with the  
25       first testifier.  I will ask the testifier to

1 spell their name. We will receive the testimony.  
2 Each testifier is allotted five minutes.  
3 Ms. Hendricks, if you could time it for me and  
4 we'll just move from testifier to testifier.

5 Okay. It is important that we keep the  
6 sound as low as possible so we could hear the  
7 testifier, okay? So, you may begin, Sir, by  
8 stating your name.

9 MR. UDHWANI: Thank you. Good evening,  
10 everybody.

11 HEARING EXAMINER: What we request to do  
12 is to have the testifier sit on this side of the  
13 table, but he won't be able to face you because I  
14 need his testimony recorded.

15 MR. UDHWANI: Once again, good evening.  
16 My name is Gary Udhwani, G-a-r-y, U-d-h-w-a-n-i,  
17 and I've been living in St. Thomas for two and a  
18 half years now. I have been living on St. Croix  
19 for 35. The main reason for me to come out here  
20 today was I was kind of pushed here by my wife,  
21 who runs a restaurant and is totally tired and  
22 very frustrated with her utility bill and the  
23 constant power outages. In a small restaurant,  
24 which is no more than about 700 square feet, we  
25 pay \$2300 a month if we run our air conditioning.

1 We have figured out a way that we do not turn on  
2 the air conditioning until the first customer  
3 walks in and decides to sit in the air conditioned  
4 space because we do have outdoor sitting. By  
5 doing that, we save almost \$200 a month, but this  
6 is not how we should be living. As my personal  
7 business, I'm a solar installer, and I am not  
8 going to talk about my solar business but I am  
9 going to talk about the people that I have met  
10 while being asked for quotes.

11 While on St. Croix, I started the business  
12 in 2010, and between 2010 and 2014, I met retired  
13 old people who do not even use hot water for  
14 bathing, and these are 70, 75-year-old people,  
15 right? They have no air conditioning. Their room  
16 temperature must have been at least 60 degrees  
17 when I walked in, and they could not even afford  
18 to turn on a fan. So the conditions are really a  
19 lot worse than what you can imagine because trust  
20 me, you live in a much better condition than what  
21 I have seen people living here, and it just burns  
22 my heart that we cannot do something for these  
23 people. 95 percent of the world's nations have  
24 subsidized energy. We understand energy rates are  
25 high, not only here, but they are high all over

1 the world because most of the energy is either  
2 produced by coal or fossil, some kind of fossil  
3 fuel, and the costs are there. They cannot be  
4 denied, but most governments maintain their  
5 economies by controlling the cost of energy and  
6 subsidizing it.

7 In the Virgin Islands, I'm reading here  
8 for the first time, honestly, and it says that the  
9 utility should make 6 to 8 percent income after  
10 reinvested in the remaking of the utility after  
11 Hurricane Hugo. You guys paid a LEAC. That LEAC  
12 was reconstruction of the utility. It wasn't the  
13 fuel charge like it is now. So where is my  
14 6 percent, because I was here. I paid that, you  
15 know. I paid the LEAC. Where is my 6 percent, at  
16 least from my share of what I paid. So I'm sorry,  
17 I am a little furious and frustrated. I love the  
18 utility. I work for them. I do projects with  
19 them. The guys who are in there, they're really  
20 good. They want to do good. 90 percent of the  
21 utility employees are absolutely amazing. I think  
22 the problem is the policy and the decision-making.  
23 What can a lineman do? He has to follow  
24 instructions. What's his choice? There is  
25 nothing he can do. So it is so messed up when I

1 work with these, people as soon as they come out  
2 of work, they take their uniform off, 'I can't  
3 walk around with a WAPA uniform.' How could you  
4 even work for somebody like that when you cannot  
5 walk around with your own uniform just for  
6 ten-minutes to get from your car to your house?  
7 So the problems are much larger.

8 You know, somebody like me, I wouldn't  
9 even care if the rate is 20-cents more. I could  
10 afford it. My light bill is 20, \$30. I am a  
11 solar guy. I know how to work quietly, peacefully  
12 with very low energy, and yes, on some of my  
13 properties, I do have solar, but currently on my  
14 house, I don't because I'm just so busy working  
15 outside. But this is outrage. This is just wrong  
16 in many ways. And if they cannot bring it down  
17 as, you know, what it cost, then the government  
18 needs to not only not pay their bill, but  
19 subsidize utility so that small businesses can  
20 operate.

21 First, they need to pay their damn bills,  
22 all right? The hospital -- and it's very funny  
23 how conveniently the hospital and the schools  
24 don't pay their bills, because they know you will  
25 not complain about it. It's just not that simple.

1       It is a game that these guys are playing. They  
2       know that you will not complain. You will have  
3       your heart say, oh, the hospital is not paying the  
4       bill, it's okay. You know, the hospital is fine.  
5       The school is not paying, oh, that will be fine,  
6       the school is not paying. But what about the rest  
7       of the government who is paying? So why these  
8       two -- plus the streetlight bills are not being  
9       paid if I'm not mistaken. This was the case about  
10      three, four-years back. I don't know if they have  
11      caught up. I don't follow these things anymore  
12      very strongly, and my voice is kind of very  
13      strong. I come out very strong, so I mostly try  
14      to keep to myself, and thank you very much. Thank  
15      you for listening.

16               HEARING EXAMINER: The next testifier is  
17      Baldarn.

18               MS. BALKRANA: Hi. Good afternoon. You  
19      need my name spelled?

20               HEARING EXAMINER: Yes, spell your first  
21      and last name.

22               MS. BALKRANA: S-a-l-l-y. Last name is  
23      B-a-l-k-r-a-n-a. Actually, I am here tonight  
24      because I am the owner of the Indian restaurant in  
25      Red Hook and, you know, like my husband did say,



1 we do operate a very small, and because of keeping  
2 our employees, like we do hire local employees, so  
3 we have our employees there, but the rates of  
4 WAPA, water, power is getting to a state that I  
5 don't even think -- it's impossible to even  
6 understand how would you keep going on in the  
7 business when the rates are so high. And  
8 everything is promises, we're gonna do this, we're  
9 gonna do this, we're gonna go to propane, we're  
10 gonna do that and nothing really has worked for us  
11 so far. So my only thing is, I just came just to  
12 say that -- to see if there was, you know,  
13 anything that we can actually do, or they could do  
14 to just help the situation because if it keeps up  
15 like this, I don't think a lot of people could be  
16 in business for much longer. I am not saying we,  
17 by the way. So that's all I had to say. I didn't  
18 even need all the time.

19 HEARING EXAMINER: Mr. Steven Boswell.

20 MR. BOSSWELL: Good evening, everyone.

21 Steven is S-t-e-v-e-n, Bosswell is  
22 B-o-s-s-w-e-l-l. I have been a Virgin Islander  
23 since I graduated from college in Texas for a  
24 little bit over 14 years now and absolutely love  
25 the island that we live in.

1           As of right now, I own three different  
2       restaurants and Prime Hospitality. We consist of  
3       Cafe Amici, Prime and Taste of Paradise Point.  
4       We're relatively a new company. I used to be part  
5       of the Havana Blue Group. We lost absolutely  
6       everything in the storms, and instead of leaving,  
7       I stayed. I helped rebuild and I rebuilt my  
8       restaurant group. And now I am seeing firsthand,  
9       actually handling the accounting side of the  
10      business of the struggles that small business  
11      owners go through here. And these struggles are  
12      what I would like to call close to impossible.  
13      Only the most strong survive out here. Only the  
14      best will survive out here, and so I have to fight  
15      to be the best.

16           Now, as far as our expenses are concerned,  
17      on top of our gross receipts and the astronomical  
18      amount of taxes that we pay, those of us who do it  
19      legitimately, our WAPA rate is something that is a  
20      huge hinderance to us not because so much is such  
21      a high rate, but because we have to figure out how  
22      do we not charge you so much to where you come  
23      into my restaurant and you say, well, that's too  
24      expensive. So, what do I do? I have to cut my  
25      cost. I'm gonna go off-island for ordering. What

1        did I just do? Now, I'm cutting off local  
2        business because somehow me failing doesn't work.  
3        So I have to figure out how in the heck am I going  
4        to cut my cost load to when you come into my  
5        restaurant you're still going to buy my food  
6        without feeling like you're getting ripped off.  
7        And you know who's getting off, I'm getting ripped  
8        off by WAPA every single month.

9                My restaurant in town over one and a half  
10        years has increased by 50 percent of our WAPA  
11        bill. My WAPA bill at prime is \$12,000. The  
12        lowest I've ever had is \$10,000. I'm open four  
13        nights a week, my friends, four nights a week. I  
14        turn the AC on about 2:30 in the afternoon every  
15        single day to cool down so you guys could have a  
16        wonderful experience that we work really hard to  
17        create. That's not sustainable.

18               Right now, I have had 60 employees. We  
19        have hit our threshold. We no longer can deal  
20        with any rate increases. If anyone wants to share  
21        the definition of insanity, it's doing the same  
22        thing over and over and over. Is this the last  
23        rate increase we're going to get? Are we just  
24        going to keep doing it, because what happens now?  
25        My house was 5 to 600 bucks a month. Last three

1 months a thousand dollars a month. I go down to  
2 WAPA, very simple, and I say, can you please tell  
3 me has my rate increased. I'm sorry, has my usage  
4 increased. Show me my usage. Tell me it has. I  
5 know it hasn't. The sweet lady working in there  
6 could not tell me anything. We talk about cents.  
7 Let's talk about percentage of our bill. Our  
8 bills are increasing 50, 60, 70 percent. Can we  
9 explain it? I don't see any explanation from this  
10 from anybody. And I love this place. I don't  
11 want to leave, but hey, Governor Bryan, let's  
12 change course now, correct? Is this not the  
13 definition of time to change course now? How much  
14 longer are we going to put up with it? The  
15 threshold has been hit. It's been hit. We're  
16 here. We're done. Let's figure it out. As a  
17 businessman, I'll tell you this, and if my  
18 statistics is wrong, what I've last seen is that  
19 we're paying somewhere between the third to fifth  
20 largest utility rate in the world. Tell me I'm  
21 wrong. I'm fine. Listen, I wish you would tell  
22 me I'm wrong. As a business person, do you think  
23 that there's not a lot of electrical companies  
24 that see us paying that and isn't like,  
25 opportunity? Guess what, we will take that

1       opportunity, okay. And I will tell you this, to  
2       WAPA, for the first time ever, I never thought  
3       solar power was an option for me, but now that I'm  
4       paying 10 to \$12,000 a month. Guess what, my  
5       solar proposal is being put in the works. And now  
6       I won't be paying it anymore because what am I  
7       gonna do? Am I gonna pay in and go send 60  
8       employees to the unemployment line, let that be  
9       the government's problem as well? Our hands are  
10      tied. We cannot increase our rates anymore.  
11      Increase rates are not the answer. It's insane.  
12      Thank you.

13               HEARING EXAMINER: Next we have Ms.  
14      Sujanani.

15               MS. SUJANANI: So the first name  
16      J-e-z-e-l-l-i-a. Last name, S-u-j-a-n-a-n-i.  
17      Okay. So Jezellia is how you pronounce my first  
18      name. I was born and raised here. Lived here  
19      basically all my life. Went to Florida for a few  
20      months, came back. In Florida, my bill for a  
21      one-bedroom apartment, I was only paying \$30 a  
22      month. Come here, two-bedroom apartment in the  
23      country, \$300 one month, \$400, \$260-something,  
24      it's insane. So I'm just gonna read something  
25      that somebody wrote, and I'm not trying to attack

1 anyone but I'm just gonna read this and that will  
2 be my testimony.

3 "The USVI is a sanctuary for the corrupt,  
4 a place where corruption is enabled and never  
5 vanquish. Its residents feel like the Government,  
6 Legislature and WAPA all work hand-in-hand and no  
7 one is ever held accountable. Many witness or  
8 read of what I believe is just a fraction of the  
9 blatant financial mismanagement and corruption of  
10 WAPA on October 1st in the senate hearing. Why is  
11 PSC still even considering this rate hike request  
12 after this? Documents have been released that  
13 reveal grants and loans that WAPA had received,  
14 yet WAPA claims they need more? Is it so they  
15 could continue what I believe should be called  
16 money laundering by paying thousands of dollars in  
17 rent for unoccupied spaces, or is it so they could  
18 wire more money to offshore accounts and then  
19 claim it was an innocent error? Better yet, could  
20 it be that the government rerouted their funds to  
21 other causes such as what happened with the  
22 Medicaid funds that the V.I. recently received?  
23 Had some of WAPA's fund lined Governor Bryan and  
24 his friends' pockets? Why was he afraid of the  
25 baseless criticism that would be discussed during

1 the senate hearing? I've seen the WAPA transition  
2 cluster report that was released by the  
3 Bryan/Roach team. I've also seen some pages of  
4 WAPA's financial statement. How can anyone have  
5 confidence that those numbers are factual? It is  
6 known that Witt O'Brien, which was the company  
7 that, you know, they hired to consult, works with  
8 the accounting firm once known as BDO to audit  
9 WAPA's use of grants received by FEMA. Should we  
10 trust their findings when the firm once known as  
11 BDO is managed by people who on Governor Bryan's  
12 campaign team? It seems fairly similar to former  
13 P.R., Puerto Rico's governor, Jose George's  
14 relationship of BDO, and we know that guy got  
15 arrested." Whether it is WAPA or the government  
16 fault for the mismanagement, residents shouldn't  
17 have to pay for it.

18 I'm saddened that the decision to raise  
19 the rates has been dragged on for so long by the  
20 PSC. The request should have been met with an  
21 immediate no.

22 I was told by a former senator of the USVI  
23 that the rates will be approved as they see that  
24 as the only way to save WAPA. I hope that he is  
25 wrong and that the PSC will make the right

1 decision. However, how can I trust the PSC when  
2 they have granted rate hikes before? A better  
3 question is, who will stay on the islands to pay  
4 the new rates if they increase it. Perhaps what  
5 happened in Puerto Rico with PREPA, that's the  
6 public utility and the government, which you know  
7 they like bankrupted, should happen here. It  
8 seems that will be the only way to hold the  
9 corrupt accountable.

10 I also wanted to say a lady, she wanted me  
11 to like read a bunch of signatures about the  
12 petition that's been going around. It's too much  
13 signatures for me to read. Basically the purpose  
14 of it is to say WAPA Must Go and they need to be  
15 held accountable and maybe the federal government  
16 needs to intervene and hold everyone accountable.  
17 I know a lot of people don't agree with that but I  
18 don't know what's going to happen. So it's like  
19 over three hundred and something thousand  
20 signatures, okay? Thank you.

21 HEARING EXAMINER: Next, I can't make out  
22 the last name, but the first name is Hooman,  
23 H-o-o-m-a-n.

24 MR. PEDRAM: Good evening. Hooman,  
25 H-o-o-m-a-n. Last name P-e-d-r-a-m. I am a



1 business owner and I've lived in St. Thomas since  
2 2008. I moved here originally to open a business,  
3 end up losing that business, working for somebody  
4 else, and then opened Tap and Still, which I have  
5 three locations, and I opened Chicken and Bowling,  
6 which I have one location, and a brewery. As far  
7 as what's been happening with WAPA and like the  
8 direction we're going in, obviously, I don't  
9 believe that any sort of rate hike, raising it is  
10 going to save us. It's not going to fix the  
11 problem. If we've had this problem for this long,  
12 what's this extra amount of money going to do for  
13 us, which is just going to get lost in the  
14 shuffle. It's just going to hit the pocketbooks  
15 of the people that need that little bit of money  
16 the most. Like your base rate, you're not  
17 screwing me. You're screwing your own people and  
18 you have been screwing your own people from  
19 Fucking Day One. I'm sorry.

20 HEARING EXAMINER: Okay. You know what,  
21 we're not going to do that tonight.

22 MR. PEDRAM: I'm sorry, I apologize. Just  
23 a quick F bomb there. Sorry. At the end of the  
24 day, though, I run my business and I try to run it  
25 as efficiently as possible. When I opened my

1 business, to go get a burger somewhere, it was  
2 like 15, 16 bucks, and I came in, and I was like,  
3 you know what, I can figure out how to sell this  
4 burger where I could still make a profit, where I  
5 could pay employees. I have over a hundred  
6 employees here on St. Thomas. I could pay  
7 everyone, I could take them on boat trips, do  
8 things that people do and still have a good, fair  
9 product. This is not a fair product, right. So,  
10 at the end of the day, either the government has  
11 to step in and not raise the prices, but step in  
12 and save us. Like this is a bad relationship  
13 between the people of St. Thomas and WAPA. This  
14 is like an abusive relationship that we're just  
15 sticking around for and taking the beatings,  
16 right? At this point, if we raise the prices, the  
17 beatings will continue. And on top of paying the  
18 most, we lose probably the most amount of  
19 electronics out of anyone out there, right? I  
20 think -- my whole life, I'm 40-years old, 43-years  
21 old. Before I moved to St. Thomas, I only bought  
22 one refrigerator. In the ten years, I've lived  
23 here, I've bought four brand new refrigerators in  
24 different houses. Like the problem isn't just  
25 this house has bad wiring and this house -- it's

1        everywhere. I mean, it's rampant. It's -- like  
2        the last guy said, this is basically like it's  
3        crazy, right? And to come out and ask for more  
4        money when you're losing the money that you asked  
5        for before, it's crazy. If WAPA works for me, if  
6        it was my employees, basically they would all be  
7        fired, you know, because there is no way you could  
8        come back and ask for more. And honestly, like I  
9        honestly try to not raise my prices. I think at  
10       Tap and Still, in five years I've raised my prices  
11       one time. Anytime I can donate anything, I do  
12       that, and I don't even really complain about my  
13       businesses and WAPA. Mostly, my complaint is at  
14       my personal home, which for most people it's like  
15       a personal problem. You can't trust that you're  
16       going to have power. Your power might destroy the  
17       stuff you have, and at the end of it, you know,  
18       adding insult to injury, you get this bill where  
19       so many days it didn't have power, and for some  
20       reason it is more expensive than it was before.  
21       They haven't proven they are responsible with this  
22       money, so they shouldn't be asking for more money.  
23       At the end of the day, if we were to see some sort  
24       of light at the end of the tunnel, maybe we could  
25       go down this road, but honestly, at this point,

1 something bigger has to happen. The couple cents,  
2 which will end up becoming dollars for us is not  
3 going to save this disaster that's WAPA. I mean,  
4 honestly, it should be illegal.

5 HEARING EXAMINER: What is the amount of  
6 your monthly bill on average for your businesses?

7 MR. PEDRAM: In Red Hook I pay 3,500 on  
8 average. In Havensight, I pay 5,500 a month on  
9 average. In St. John, I pay 2,800 bucks a month.  
10 Chicken and Bowling is like 10,000 a month. The  
11 brewery is like 4,000 a month. So I think like  
12 single-handily, where does that put me at 25,000 a  
13 month? And the crazy thing is -- the crazy thing  
14 is like the billing cycles are so whacked out that  
15 if you -- listen, I was so happy when my WAPA  
16 worked. Couple days after the storm I was able to  
17 open the doors and basically give out food, right?  
18 Like what I had, I was like let's cook it, let's  
19 give it out. But then I was able to open and give  
20 people a place to go, charge their phones, give my  
21 staff a place to wash their clothes, right. Fine.  
22 I'm down to do it, but man, when I got that bill  
23 after like eight months of being on WAPA, like,  
24 here you go. I'm like, wow. And in their right  
25 mind, how do you expect anyone, because I'm sure

1       local citizens got this bill that was like six  
2       months of them not charging you, right, and you  
3       just went through hell and back, right, and now  
4       you get slapped with this, like, hey, we're gonna  
5       shut you off if you can't pay this crazy bill  
6       times six months.

7               HEARING EXAMINER: I am going to ask you  
8       to start to conclude only because --

9               MR. PEDRAM: I'm already concluded.  
10       Honestly at the end of the day for us to even be  
11       sitting here is crazy, like seriously.

12              HEARING EXAMINER: Next we have Kristen  
13       Elizabeth.

14              MS. ELIZABETH: Good evening. It is  
15       Kristen, K-r-i-s-t-e-n, E-l-i-z-a-b-e-t-h. Thank  
16       you for this opportunity and it came at short  
17       notice, literally at a quarter to five, and it was  
18       so important to me, again, to show up for this  
19       community.

20              I've lived here, because I filled out my  
21       jury duty paperwork today, 25 years, four months,  
22       three weeks and two days. I moved here at five  
23       with my father. So I am not new to the community.  
24       This community matters to me in a heart sense, a  
25       business sense and a personal sense. I think

1       often, even though our bills, without this  
2       increase both at home, and we have a small cabinet  
3       shop in Contant, and we're kind of the only game  
4       in town where you might think, oh, you're  
5       thriving. No, we're barely surviving because we  
6       have one man and one helper, and people come to  
7       our door and I'm down there being that helper, and  
8       we can't help because we're just small people.  
9       But yet this power bill, when we lost  
10      everything -- we lost 60 percent of our business  
11      in the hurricane. We lost the one A/C unit in our  
12      one little office, so half the lighting, and yet  
13      our bill is double, and this is without a rate  
14      increase. So, finally, after 25 years, we buy a  
15      home and we have a pretty consistent power bill,  
16      and then it goes up a hundred and then another  
17      hundred. So you say a hundred is not so bad. You  
18      could not go to Steve's for dinner. You could  
19      skip going Tap and Still. I could turn off  
20      another light, turn off another this, call Dion  
21      and say, what's your bill this month and flip out,  
22      but the truth of the matter is when you combine a  
23      250-dollar increase in your office and a  
24      250-dollar increase in your home and come up with  
25      \$500, and the two of you are what are creating

1       this business, \$500 just doesn't come out of your  
2       pocket. I can't speak for the average person, but  
3       I feel pretty comfortable saying that no one --  
4       well, short of board members in some businesses  
5       are thriving in this community anymore. We are  
6       surviving, and that is not how anyone should be  
7       living. So, to this point, you don't come up with  
8       this money, and turning off a light here and there  
9       when you don't even know why the bills keep  
10      doubling and hundreds come in at a time, where do  
11      you cut this corner? Do you get solar? To what  
12      avail? People are saying, I have solar but yet  
13      I'm still paying.

14             My heart really -- we can leave, right? I  
15      have a place to go. It's not what I want to do.  
16      I don't want to be one more person that abandons  
17      this community. I think what really speaks to me  
18      is there are people that can barely afford to live  
19      day-to-day. There are women and children that  
20      can't afford, or are crowded in homes, and our  
21      schools are in ill repair, and the hospital  
22      doesn't have blood, and this is falling down, and  
23      that may not matter at a PSC board review, but the  
24      fact of the matter is it does matter because  
25      everyone is suffering. And why don't people come

1 out here and protest? I came to the first one.  
2 There is maybe 80 countable people out there  
3 because it's like going back to the abuse. People  
4 are afraid. And you know what you do when you're  
5 afraid? You think you're gonna fight back? This  
6 morning a man came to my sliding glass door, and I  
7 was in my shower and the dogs are barking and he  
8 puts his face to the door. I have a 300-foot  
9 driveway. There were vehicles in the yard and  
10 this person is probably not able to pay a power  
11 bill. So let me go see if someone is in that  
12 home. It has scared the heck out of me, right? I  
13 am home by myself. But the point to that is,  
14 people are afraid, so they're gonna do things to  
15 make that money. People are afraid. So they  
16 don't come out, right? What are we going to do?  
17 What's it gonna change? Doesn't matter. The  
18 bills go up. It doesn't matter. We could protest  
19 until we're purple. Everyone should come out. My  
20 husband laughed, you're gonna go? You think  
21 you're going to make a difference? I think we all  
22 make a difference. You have to try to make a  
23 difference. Will we survive? Maybe. Do we live  
24 in fear? Yes. Do we live in -- what about next  
25 month? What happens next? Where do we go? Where



1       does the old person go? Where does the mom go?  
2       Where does the money come from? IRB, today I paid  
3       a tax bill for \$15,000. Barbara Richards, who is  
4       amazing, I said to her, what are you going to do  
5       when power keeps going up? She said, I don't know  
6       because my pay check doesn't go up, and she's a  
7       government employee. We all want to say it's  
8       going to be okay, but people are afraid. I'm  
9       afraid. Like what physically happens when money  
10      just doesn't show up anymore? Where do we go? It  
11      doesn't just show up. People come to your door  
12      and look through to see if they could rob you.  
13      That's what comes up in this small community.  
14      It's not White, Black, where the heck you were  
15      born. You're here today. We matter today because  
16      we live and we breathe and we use power today on  
17      this island. No matter where you're from and  
18      whether you own a business, we live here. We're a  
19      community, and you're forcing us to not live here.

20               HEARING EXAMINER: Thank you. Next  
21      person, I cannot make out the handwriting for the  
22      first name, but it appears to be a Ms.  
23      Otis-Joseph.

24               MS. JOSEPH: Good evening, everyone. It's  
25      what I have been saying all along, it is the

1       mismanagement of WAPA that have us in this  
2       condition. The more rate increase, the more rate  
3       increase, the less you see where the money is  
4       going, because the money is going -- I hear these  
5       big credit cards, a hundred thousand dollars,  
6       these high-end salaries. I believe that -- I have  
7       been saying it all along, the WAPA board needs to  
8       revamp. It needs to change. We want change here  
9       in the Virgin Islands, in this utility that is  
10      going down because of the leadership that is in  
11      there. This is my home and I feel bad seeing what  
12      is going on in my home. Businesses are not going  
13      to prosper here, are not going to stay here as  
14      long as we continue having this rope around our  
15      necks, which is WAPA. This is terrible here.

16               And then I hear them talking about by the  
17      end of 2020 we are going to have another -- it's  
18      not going to happen. Look the fiasco of the  
19      propane combustion. Look what happened,  
20      87 million it was supposed to be, and it end up  
21      \$160 million. Who's paying for it? We, the  
22      ratepayers. When they're living lavishly, we are  
23      the ones paying for all of that. It is not fair  
24      for the ratepayers. It is not fair for us. You  
25      don't have to be on a fixed income to suffer the

1       crunch because once the rest goes up, the  
2       supermarkets bring up their grocery prices all  
3       over. The telephone, everybody. You see, they  
4       take advantage of all of that, and then who pays  
5       for that? We. Okay? So, I done fed up with  
6       seeing all of this happening in my home where  
7       these people -- every minute. I heard this  
8       gentleman who was here testifying a while ago, oh,  
9       we're supposed to see a 10-cent reduction, from  
10      43-cents to 33-cents. It's not going to happen.  
11      It's not going to happen. Look people closing  
12      down businesses. Why? People are closing down  
13      because they cannot afford the WAPA bills. And  
14      we're talking about economic growth? It's not  
15      going to happen, not as long as we have that  
16      killer named WAPA. And then they're talking  
17      about, you know -- I even forget now. They're  
18      talking about, oh, when you go down, the payment  
19      plan. Which payment plan you're talking about?  
20      Payment plan? That's like putting a rope around  
21      your neck because you pay down, and then when you  
22      look, the next bill comes. And when you look when  
23      you're late in paying that bill, late fee. So  
24      they continue adding on, putting more stress on  
25      the people. I don't think they need any more

1 money because right now \$2.3 million disappeared  
2 up in the air and we don't know. We hearing about  
3 federal investigation, FBI investigation. What's  
4 that going to take, another 20-years before we  
5 find out? We will never find out.

6 HEARING EXAMINER: I am going for respect,  
7 that we limit the commentary because we have a  
8 stenographer that needs to capture everything that  
9 the testifier is saying, and when people talk at  
10 the same time, she won't be able to do that. So I  
11 understand that we have very strong feelings about  
12 this issue, but let's try and make sure we have a  
13 complete record. I am not sure if you stated your  
14 full name when you started.

15 MS. JOSEPH: Carmen Otis-Joseph.

16 HEARING EXAMINER: C-a-r-m-e-n?

17 MS. JOSEPH: Yes.

18 HEARING EXAMINER: You may continue.

19 MS. JOSEPH: I lose my thought now. I am  
20 so upset.

21 HEARING EXAMINER: You were saying that --  
22 you ended with the investigation and you don't  
23 know how long that will take.

24 THE WITNESS: Another 20-years before they  
25 find where that money disappeared to because I

1 find that very strange. As I heard Mr. Kupfer  
2 saying on the radio, oh, that this money, they  
3 sent it to some address, they did not know what  
4 the address was. Hey, I don't believe that. I am  
5 not believing one thing. They're making us look  
6 like fools, but we are not fools. Right now I am  
7 so upset. The other day I had to go down there  
8 and make noise by WAPA, make noise down there by  
9 WAPA because they sent me a bill.

10 MS. HENDRICKS: One minute remaining.

11 MS. JOSEPH: They sent me a bill. When I  
12 went down there, they're going to tell me, that's  
13 the bill, because they're estimating our bills.  
14 That's why we're getting them kind of bills.  
15 They're estimating our bills and continue to  
16 estimate our bills, taking advantage of the  
17 people. We cannot take it anymore. Enough is  
18 enough abuse of the poor people. You don't have  
19 to be a victim to feel the crunch of what is going  
20 on. Thank you for the time.

21 HEARING EXAMINER: Denfield Brown?

22 MR. BROWNE: Good evening to the panel and  
23 to everyone.

24 HEARING EXAMINER: Please state your full  
25 name.

1           MR. BROWNE: My name is Denfield Browne,  
2           D-e-n-f-i-e-l-d B-r-o-w-n-e, and I'm here tonight  
3           to testify. I guess we're all here fed up,  
4           definitely fed up with WAPA and the situation  
5           that's going on there. They have been gouging us  
6           for the longest while for years, especially since  
7           they put in the smart meters. They need to get  
8           rid of them. Get the regular meters back.

9           Now, we have been gouging with the high  
10          cost of electricity, and that's why a lot of the  
11          businesses go out of business. When they have the  
12          high rate of electricity, people can't afford to  
13          go out and pay for what they want and the  
14          businesses are getting less business. Many of  
15          them have closed down because when the light is so  
16          high, the merchants are going to pass the bill on  
17          to the consumers and we cannot afford that. Many  
18          of us cannot afford that.

19          The PSC, what are you doing for the people  
20          of the Virgin Islands? WAPA employees, I am not  
21          talking about the local employees. It is the  
22          management of WAPA. The employees and I get along  
23          very well. They get along with many of us but we  
24          just can't understand what is going on with WAPA  
25          and the high cost of electricity and the water

1 bill. I hear a man, I think it was Monday down  
2 there going to pay his light bill where I went to  
3 pay mine, and he said, all of a sudden he get a  
4 light bill for 600 and something for water and he  
5 can't afford to pay it. They told him he has to  
6 go on a payment plan. That payment plan, you  
7 never finish paying because you -- let's say you  
8 have a bill for \$500, and they put you on payment  
9 plan, next month you could only pay -- maybe you  
10 could only pay 2 or \$300. The next month, that  
11 bill is added to that. So it's gone up higher  
12 again. How are you going to pay it? How are you  
13 going to pay it? We need a better operating WAPA.  
14 WAPA has been paying these high rent in different  
15 places. Why they don't fix the burn down place in  
16 Subbase? They went from there to Beljen Road.  
17 From there to Fourwinds. Now they're over in  
18 Havensight paying these high costs of rent,  
19 thousands and thousands of dollars a month. The  
20 generators, I think they say they're paying  
21 \$500,000 a month for one. If you have four, it's  
22 up to \$2 million. How they expect us -- so,  
23 they're gouging us with the prices and want to  
24 raise the price of electricity every two or three  
25 months. How they expect us to pay it? Many of us

1 are on fixed incomes. We can't afford to do that.  
2 We can't afford it. Those who are living high can  
3 afford to do it, but we, the local people cannot  
4 afford it. And it's time they do something about  
5 the nonsense that's going on with WAPA and stop  
6 ripping off the people.

7 The merchants, the grocery stores go up --  
8 as soon as they hear about the PSC raising, the  
9 price in the grocery store goes up, and they don't  
10 come back down when they go up. Not only the  
11 grocery stores, the gas stations and all that kind  
12 of stuff. How they expect us to live? 2020 they  
13 say we should see a decrease, the end of 2020,  
14 they'll decrease in our electrical bills. Who  
15 knows? How much time it's going to raise before  
16 the end of 2020? This is the kind of thing we  
17 need to look into and listen to and open our ears  
18 and understand what the people of WAPA saying.  
19 The executive director, how he expects us to do  
20 this? So people have to be making a decision  
21 whether to buy food, the medication and doctor  
22 bills. These kind of things, we should not be  
23 going through this. I think WAPA is paying -- the  
24 consumers here are paying the highest electricity  
25 bill in the world. Some of the Caribbean islands



1       pay 15-cents, 17-cents, 20-cents. Why we have to  
2       be paying 40-something cents. So, we need to --  
3       the people need to get together and stop being  
4       afraid to speak out about what's happening in the  
5       territory and stop putting up with the nonsense  
6       and bologna that WAPA is pushing out to us.

7               We appreciate the people who are here  
8       tonight and it shows you have courage and not  
9       afraid to speak out like I'm doing now and the  
10      others have done. Carmen and I had started this  
11      thing so many years ago, three or four years ago,  
12      right?

13             MS. JOSEPH: Right.

14             MR. BROWNE: Protesting against WAPA. We  
15      have been called all kind of names, but we don't  
16      care. It's not for us personally. It's for the  
17      people of the territory, and that's what you all  
18      have to understand. We thank you, everybody, for  
19      coming out here tonight, and with that, ladies and  
20      gentlemen, I close my case.

21             HEARING EXAMINER: Jason Budson.

22             MR. BUDSON: My name is Jason Budson.  
23      With the consistent or constant utility rate  
24      changes and consistent supply of energy to  
25      ratepayers, I propose you look at a different

1 model than providing power to WAPA ratepayers,  
2 including clean energy.

3 Why I look again at a rural electric  
4 cooperative model that was proposed years ago as a  
5 solution? Many of you remember the delegate,  
6 Donna Christensen, during the time that we had  
7 Southern Energy, there was a real push to say, do  
8 we go private or do we look at other alternatives.  
9 One of them was to look at making it a  
10 cooperative.

11 A cooperative is a voluntary contractual  
12 organization of people having a mutual ownership  
13 interest in providing themselves a service on a  
14 non-profit basis. An electric cooperative is an  
15 example of a private non-profit company whose  
16 purpose is to deliver electricity to customers or  
17 members, us.

18 As a cooperative, they are required to  
19 fulfill two requirements, including reinvesting  
20 revenue into their service area, community,  
21 through stable rates as we all talked about  
22 tonight, infrastructure or returning to its  
23 members through patronage capital. Cooperatives  
24 are also required to operate in a utility a  
25 cooperative using a model of democracy, and that's

1           what we need to see.

2                       Everyone here tonight talked about how  
3       we're not getting the bang for our buck. We're  
4       not seeing it. We are the ratepayers. We are the  
5       ones that should be making the decisions and we're  
6       not. Why doesn't the VI look again at possibly  
7       becoming a cooperative under the National Rural  
8       Electric Cooperative Association? The public  
9       should consider having WAPA owned by a coop  
10      because it could open the doors to investment  
11      funding from National Rural Electric Cooperative  
12      Association and the Cooperative Finance  
13      Cooperation.

14                   Now, I know a lot of you are saying, how  
15      can we afford it, because we are about \$2 billion  
16      in debt with WAPA, 2 billion. Why don't we try?  
17      There has already been a feasibility study that  
18      had been done back in 2000 from the employees of  
19      WAPA. Let's dust it off. Let's update it.

20                   There are three differences in types of  
21      utility models. With a cooperative model, I want  
22      to give you a little bit of background. The  
23      ratepayers own the utility. A democratically  
24      elected board performs oversight of the utility.  
25      One meter, one vote. The people who work for the

1 utility are employees of this coop.

2 Direct accountability to the ratepayers.  
3 Ratepayers determine strategy and policies through  
4 the election board members that advocate their  
5 preferences. Capital required for infrastructure  
6 and maintenance, repairs and improvement comes  
7 from access to federal lending programs, the ones  
8 that I mentioned. A national coop own like banks,  
9 like WAPA Finance Corporation or a co-bank. This  
10 cooperative is not-for-profit. This is  
11 not-for-profit with margins. If any, return it to  
12 the ratepayers over time through patronage capital  
13 retirements.

14 The other model is a government-owned  
15 municipal, which you have right now, the city or  
16 public utility district owns and operates the  
17 utility. The city council appoints a utility  
18 board that perhaps have the actual oversight of  
19 the utility. People who work for the utility are  
20 employees of the city in a utility district, no  
21 direct accountability to the utility taxpayers.  
22 Indirect function of the city government. You  
23 hear that, no indirect. No direct accountability.

24 Capital requirement infrastructure.  
25 Maintenance, repairs and improvement come through

1       bonds issued. So, again, the maintenance comes  
2       from that. It is not a not-for-profit with  
3       margins. If any, it is retained by the city  
4       utility district.

5               Then I go into how it's owned by the  
6       individual, the actual companies, like we have  
7       Southern Energy. So, in conclusion, I believe  
8       that the cooperative model is the best and most  
9       just approach to manage WAPA given that in many  
10      states, including Hawaii, the one that the former  
11      delegate spoke about, it has benefited from this  
12      change, including base rate reductions and clean  
13      energy production, and storage which, of course,  
14      we all desperately need. So if we could look  
15      outside of the box, if we could try to look at  
16      another model that has worked elsewhere, there has  
17      been 900 of these cooperatives throughout the  
18      states. They started in 1936, I believe, through  
19      farmers, believe it or not. This is one of the  
20      ways we could be trying, but the question is do we  
21      have enough capital financing to make it happen.  
22      Go back in the books, the feasibility studies and  
23      see that it happens. Thank you.

24               HEARING EXAMINER: Charles Browne.

25               MR. BROWN: Good evening, everybody.

1 Spell it just like it sounds, Charles Brown, Jr.,  
2 Pastor Charles Brown, Jr., founding pastor, Family  
3 of Faith African Methodist Episcopal Church here  
4 in St. Thomas.

5 We're a small two-year-old church family.  
6 We worship every Sunday in Red Hook above Banco  
7 Popular entrance in back at 11:00 o'clock, and as  
8 a church -- before we went to Red Hook, we were  
9 worshiping in Sugar Estate Senior Residence. So,  
10 as a church, we banded with non-profits and other  
11 stakeholders and we formed what's called in the  
12 community a safe net and we provide critical  
13 services for the community. And we have all -- as  
14 a safe net, we have been severely impacted by  
15 chronic power outages, escalating cost of utility  
16 bills and dependence of consumers on the services  
17 we provide. So, in preparation for today, I  
18 talked to many pastors and I uncovered narratives  
19 from other safety net providers about WAPA's  
20 utility issues and their impact on our ability to  
21 serve the community. So, to quickly remind  
22 everybody during Irma and Maria, multiple churches  
23 banded together. We pooled our resources and we  
24 found innovative ways to help hurting people. Our  
25 church family of faith, we literally collaborated

1 with other churches to secure hundreds and  
2 hundreds of meals over several weeks for the  
3 seniors in Sugar Estate Senior Residence because  
4 there was a community center in there where we  
5 held our first worship services after the storm,  
6 and we knew that those residents who were in that  
7 facility, because of the lack of power, instantly  
8 went from independent, which was what the facility  
9 is deemed, to be dependent overnight. We  
10 identified and we targeted who needed critical  
11 medications from pharmacies. So we, the church we  
12 went to Doctor's Choice, we went to Medicine  
13 Shoppe and we used our own church funds to help  
14 pay for prescriptions for seniors.

15 Many churches across the island and across  
16 the territory, we reached out to the people in the  
17 states that we know who were eager to send us  
18 essentials. Some sent us generators, to  
19 batteries, and everything in between, and we  
20 distributed thousands of pounds of supplies to  
21 residents who were struggling to make ends meet.  
22 As a matter of fact, there was one church, Word of  
23 Faith, they were actually in the emergency  
24 shelter, and our little church, we gave them  
25 hundreds of dollars to support them as they housed

1 residents here on St. Thomas.

2 Now, all while this is going on, most  
3 churches couldn't hold worship services because we  
4 didn't have no power. Companies where our members  
5 worked were shut for months, which meant that the  
6 members who belonged to the churches couldn't give  
7 their tides or give their offerings. So, no  
8 income coming in, no power, and yet everybody is  
9 looking to the church to provide extra service.  
10 So we're trying to do more with less with five  
11 loaves, a few fish to feed thousands, and somehow  
12 we figured out a way how to do it with no power  
13 from WAPA for months. We figured out a way. As  
14 residents and as churches, we still figured out a  
15 way how to make it happen.

16 Now, when the power was restored, what  
17 happened? Just like everybody said, our  
18 electrical appliances got burnt out. We got  
19 exorbitant utility bills, which no way align with  
20 our service, and WAPA threatened to cut us if we  
21 didn't pay. Now, big business, they pass that  
22 cost down. We're not-for-profit. We're churches.  
23 We can't pass that down. So what does that do?  
24 It cuts our ability to be able to serve, period.  
25 That's the bottom line. Now, where we could serve



1 a thousand people, we can't serve that many  
2 because of the situation with WAPA. And so it  
3 comes down to this. I preach a sermon just three  
4 weeks ago in my church. If you -- sometimes you  
5 got to call out and shut down your own. When your  
6 own are oppressing you and disrespecting you, you  
7 got to be willing to call him out and shut him  
8 down, and we lasted all these months without WAPA,  
9 we can do it again. If we have to go off the grid  
10 and shut them down, that's what we got to do.

11 HEARING EXAMINER: Desiree Wilkes.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: D-e-s-i-r-e-e W-i-l-k-e-s.  
13 Goodnight, everybody. My name is Desiree Wilkes  
14 and I came here tonight to urge the board to vote  
15 no for this rate increase. As we saw in the  
16 senate hearing a few weeks ago, WAPA runs an  
17 operationally inefficient business. There is  
18 misuse of funding. There is management -- misuse  
19 and abuse, and at the end of the day, the cost  
20 come down to us. We're in a situation where we  
21 are being bullied because this is our only  
22 electric option, whereas, in the states or in  
23 other places, you can go to another company.  
24 We're left here with just this option, and this is  
25 one of the reasons why this continues.

1           So, I read over the document that the PSC  
2       handed out tonight, and apparently the ask is for  
3       there to be a double in the lease generation  
4       surcharge. As of right now, just for a  
5       three-bedroom apartment where I live, our  
6       surcharge is \$31. If this rate doubles, that will  
7       be \$62. That is ridiculous. We are not in a  
8       situation where incomes are rising, or the  
9       cost-of-living is going down. As a matter of  
10      fact, it is increasing on a monthly basis. I pay  
11      the WAPA bill for my household and I see every  
12      month how we increase and we increase and we  
13      increase with power outages, with electronics that  
14      are being broken and destroyed, and we're still  
15      left in the situation where I'm paying an  
16      additional \$120 almost every month. That is  
17      ridiculous, and I've gone down to try to cut down  
18      my usage, cut down my own personal consumption to  
19      see if this has made a difference and it has made  
20      absolutely no difference.

21           We have members of the community that live  
22      on tanks, that live on machines, the breathing  
23      machines, and when there are extended power  
24      outages -- some of them even lose their lives to  
25      this. So I looked around the room and I thought

1       it was quite interesting, I don't see Lawrence in  
2       here at all. This is one time when the community  
3       is able the open their month and kind of share the  
4       experiences they're going through as his consumers  
5       and he is not here to hear it. So I think that's  
6       telling in and of itself. But at the end of the  
7       day, that's what we have come to expect.

8               So, I would urge the board to please vote  
9       no. At the end of the day, this hurts us. This  
10      hurts the community. This hurts businesses as we  
11      heard several other business owners mention. This  
12      hurts everyone in the long run.

13             As I heard Ms. Otis mention, this rate  
14      will not go back down. This isn't something  
15      that's temporary as they just said. Generation  
16      surcharge was actually just supposed to be until  
17      December 31st and here we are fighting for them to  
18      not double this rate. So there's clearly always a  
19      scheme and clearly always a story for them and I'm  
20      tired of hearing it. I'm tired of being bullied.  
21      I'm tired of being bullied by a company that  
22      doesn't provide service. I have consumer  
23      expectations. Every time I use my money, when I  
24      go to KMart and I purchase something and it's  
25      broken, I return it because my consumer

1           expectation was not met. I can't return my  
2           service to WAPA. I have to eat it. Every month I  
3           have to eat it. And this summer, we went through  
4           a lot of power outages, and my bill remains high.  
5           So I still can't understand how. And you see in  
6           the back where they show you your consumption, the  
7           consumption didn't go down but we had power  
8           outages every single day. That doesn't even make  
9           sense.

10                        So before I continue to get worked up, I  
11           will close and conclude here, but I would like to  
12           say if at the end of the day you choose to go  
13           forward with these rate changes, at least you know  
14           that this suffers and this hurts the people of the  
15           Virgin Islands.

16                        HEARING EXAMINER: I cannot make out the  
17           last name, but the first name appears to be  
18           Harriett.

19                        MS. MERCER: Good everybody. Thank you so  
20           much for that. Pretty good points, and the pastor  
21           as well. Sometimes you got to shut it down. I'm  
22           here to --

23                        HEARING EXAMINER: Ma'am, could you please  
24           state your name for the stenographer?

25                        MR. MERCER: Harriett Mercer. I'm

1        Harriett Mercer. And let me do this for the five  
2        minutes. As a timeline, just as a timeline, back  
3        in about March of this year and then again in May,  
4        I remember going up to the offices of Mr. Kupfer,  
5        Larry Kupfer, Lawrence, and that being -- Lawrence  
6        Kupfer, and trying to see if we could get some  
7        kind of meeting with him. I used to be on the  
8        radio with a program called Getting to the Point.  
9        Community Bulletin Board is what it has become on  
10       the Facebook page. We tried to get a meeting with  
11       him to see if we could bring it into the community  
12       or interview him or whatever and present a lot of  
13       different questions that all of the community has  
14       been asking, whether on radio, t.v., wherever,  
15       they've been asking and putting the concerns out.

16                You see Mr. Payne here? He has been doing  
17       different editorials in the paper and so forth.  
18       So different people with different questions. We  
19       try to gather those together and see if we could  
20       have a meeting.

21                I was told by his executive secretary that  
22       I will be contacted by Mr. P-R-O, the Public  
23       Relations Officer, Mr. John Greaux, that never  
24       happened. Contact was never made. That was back  
25       in March, like I said. Went back again in May and

1       the same thing. It was never made. I'm beginning  
2       to feel like it's a little condensational support.  
3       It is very condescending, the behavior of the  
4       executive team of WAPA in terms of even meeting  
5       the community's concerns. And so, therefore --  
6       then fast-forward to going to the alliance  
7       meetings where we formed this group called The  
8       Virgin Islands Alliance for Consumer Justice,  
9       Clarence Payne here being the founder, and one of  
10      the cofounders, and we went ahead and tried to see  
11      again if Mr. Kupfer could come to that location,  
12      and we would meet on Wednesdays, and he could come  
13      at that location and also do the same thing, a  
14      town hall meeting of some form, and frankly  
15      thinking that this town hall also should have been  
16      maybe somewhere larger, but we're good where we  
17      are. We have some people outside.

18               The P-R-O never happened with Mr. John  
19      Greaux. That never happened. The Alliance  
20      continues to meet every Wednesday.

21               We discussed the latest discussions on  
22      WAPA to include the state of emergency as  
23      requested by our delegate to Congress upon the  
24      governor. She wanted that the governor would go  
25      ahead and put in a state of emergency on this.

1           We also attended every meeting since June  
2           to present right here at the PSC. The PSC will  
3           call these meetings with WAPA and we would meet  
4           here and we sit in this room every time and we  
5           watch as the PSC grants WAPA a do-over, after  
6           do-over, after do-over, and hold us at bay in  
7           terms of whether or not they'll grant the rate  
8           increase. Like the young lady said here, I, too,  
9           believe that this rate increase is not deserving  
10          of the authority at this time, or at all, because  
11          we're certainly the highest, and the service is  
12          still not up to par.

13                We listened to vendors also come to  
14           testify every time in this room to join the WAPA  
15           grid trying to get a piece of the pie and even  
16           offer to, you know, have the utility generation go  
17           down. We could have utility generation for less.  
18           One by one, WAPA begged the PSC to say no to these  
19           vendors. So these vendors would come, whether  
20           they come from off-island or locals or whatever  
21           and they get turned down, or at least held off.  
22           So, therefore, WAPA wants to be the only one  
23           controlling this grid, being on this grid, but at  
24           the same time not knowing what they're doing,  
25           making bad decisions and so forth. We're talking

1 even in the legislative hearing that they had the  
2 other day and we got to see those large sums of  
3 money in the upper echelon of the administration  
4 of WAPA and we are saying that, no, this is not  
5 the time, and then those salaries should actually  
6 go down. But at the same time, we need a board  
7 that understands what they're doing and maybe  
8 have -- other kinds of legislation, of course,  
9 should come up where different requirements are  
10 needed for these board members to meet,  
11 prerequisites for them to meet so they have  
12 different qualifications to serve, but until we  
13 get there, this is what we're facing. We are  
14 outside there. We have some picket signs. One of  
15 the signs said about the audit, WAPA needs to be  
16 audited. We're told that tomorrow the PSC is  
17 expecting at 2:00 p.m. an audit. We don't know  
18 from who. We do know that the PSC requested an  
19 audit by the Inspector General of the Virgin  
20 Islands. So we look forward to see what this  
21 audit will reveal.

22 HEARING EXAMINER: The audit is specific  
23 to the Vitol contract. It not overall. And a  
24 specific time for receipt hasn't been scheduled.  
25 So I just wanted to clarify, that's the evidence



1           that came out during the evidentiary hearing. And  
2           the Inspector General did not request this audit.  
3           This audit was ordered by the PSC.

4           MS. MERCER: The other audit, right. And  
5           we know that's going to take a long time, the one  
6           that's requested by the PSC. The one that the PSC  
7           is now requesting of the Inspector General, the  
8           one for the overall, the overall audit.

9           HEARING EXAMINER: I don't have any  
10          evidence about that, but that's fine. You can  
11          continue.

12          MS. MERCER: So we look forward to  
13          auditing, indeed, of WAPA. And until then, we  
14          would like to indeed hope and, in fact, believe  
15          that you would not be so indifferent to go ahead  
16          and pass any kind of base rate increase at this  
17          time without an audit, without all kind of things  
18          delivered to the PSC as was requested. This is  
19          not the time for that. Thank you.

20          HEARING EXAMINER: Clarence Payne.

21          MR. PAYNE: Good evening. Clarence Payne.  
22          At the Chair's discretion, may I please have more  
23          than five minutes?

24          HEARING EXAMINER: I am not the chair.

25          MR. PAYNE: Who runs this meeting, you?

1                   HEARING EXAMINER: This is just a public  
2                   hearing that the hearing examiner is holding. I  
3                   want to give everyone the same amount of time. If  
4                   we have enough time, I'm gonna give you five  
5                   minutes. If we have enough time once everyone  
6                   else testifies and there are no more testifiers,  
7                   then perhaps.

8                   MR. PAYNE: Okay, thanks. I just thought  
9                   I would ask.

10                  HEARING EXAMINER: Do you have written  
11                  testimony?

12                  MR. PAYNE: I do, but I have a couple  
13                  sections I want to speak about first.

14                  HEARING EXAMINER: Okay. Are you going to  
15                  share the written testimony?

16                  MR. PAYNE: Not right now. By Friday.

17                  HEARING EXAMINER: That's fine.

18                  MR. PAYNE: I have in my hand a template  
19                  of the Office of the Governor-elect's conclusion  
20                  report that was submitted by his transition team,  
21                  24 pages, the Office of the Governor-elect. I  
22                  want to get straight down to business.

23                  Page 24, and I quote, "The financial woes  
24                  of WAPA, a looming problem that would only get  
25                  worse without a progressive board of directors

1       that is willing to make disruptive changes to  
2       positively impact WAPA's financial recovery.  
3       Currently, the only solution presented by the  
4       existing board and executive team is to raise  
5       electricity rates, and this is just not  
6       acceptable." This was submitted by the governor's  
7       transition team December 2018. He was  
8       governor-elect. It gets sweeter than that.  
9       WAPA's financial and operational problems will not  
10      be served simply by throwing money at the issues.  
11      Report sent to the governor. The mere fact that  
12      the simple solution such as these are being  
13      proposed to solve complex problems is an insult to  
14      the Virgin Islands community right here in the  
15      report. This is not a secret. This was sent to  
16      the governor before he was the governor. Sending  
17      these bands of people from WAPA to fleece the  
18      people of the Virgin Islands was wrong, and it is  
19      an injustice.

20               There is no justification to have WAPA  
21      coming back here six months later after they were  
22      given an increase on the surcharge knowing  
23      ultimately nobody can take another penny increase.  
24      Nobody. I don't understand going back and forth  
25      with WAPA where ah' you come in 60-days, come in

1       six months, come in -- for what? To tell them  
2       what? Because you have nothing to give. You  
3       have -- you start out at 87 million and you're now  
4       up to 160 million at 15 percent interest rate over  
5       ten-years, which comes to \$300 million,  
6       300 million. How are we supposed to take this?  
7       How? We can't take no more. Why do we -- why you  
8       keep allowing them to come into this  
9       quasi-judicial agency? To claim what? To claim  
10      what?

11               The last meeting we came to as the  
12      Alliance, my good friend Kent Bernier was speaking  
13      about a HUD grant. Guess what? I found in the  
14      report sent to the governor December to 2018, HUD  
15      grant. Let me hit it right quick. The only  
16      solution to request by the V.I. Government at this  
17      point is to ask for \$62 million from HUD  
18      Development Block Grant. It's right in the  
19      report. It's right here, Mr. Kupfer. It's right  
20      here. Why you keep coming down here fleecing us?  
21      We can't do no more. No more. No more increase.  
22      \$600 million is hidden somewhere in FEMA land.  
23      Ask Ducks Cole, he'll tell you, 600 million, and  
24      all we have to do, go to HUD, submit the requisite  
25      paperwork, put the \$600 million for work and allow

1 the people of the Virgin Islands to get much  
2 needed relief now.

3 HEARING EXAMINER: Mr. Leslie-Ann  
4 Williams?

5 DR. WILLIAMS: Well, I have to follow  
6 this? I would like to yield my five minutes to  
7 you. Good evening, everyone. I am Dr. Leslie Ann  
8 Williams, Leslie, L-e-s-l-i-e hyphen A-n-n,  
9 Williams, W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, and I'm a primary care  
10 physician here in St. Thomas.

11 I am not here to speak about me but I am  
12 here to speak on behalf of my patients, those who  
13 are not able to be here because of immobility  
14 issues and financial issues. I moved to  
15 St. Thomas in 2014 because I wanted to. I came  
16 because I saw there was a great need for health  
17 care provision. I came here and I stayed here  
18 after Irma because I wanted to.

19 During Irma, you know, the disaster fiasco  
20 we had, and to this day, people are still greatly  
21 affected by what happened in Irma/Maria. Homes  
22 are still in disrepair. Financially, people have  
23 not rebound. Having -- I'm sorry, good evening to  
24 the board.

25 HEARING EXAMINER: Just to be clear, we're

1 not the board. Some of us are members of the  
2 public. I am the hearing examiner. A couple of  
3 us are staff of the PSC.

4 DR. WILLIAMS: Okay, good evening all. I  
5 do not think -- I firmly believe that a rate  
6 increase is not in the best interest of the people  
7 of the Virgin Islands. Number one, I don't know  
8 what we're getting. What are we getting for the  
9 increase? What are the improvements -- this is a  
10 rhetorical question, right? What are the  
11 improvements that we ought to expect?

12 I'm going to speak on behalf of the  
13 patients who don't have generators, have fixed  
14 incomes, limited to the point where they are now  
15 rationing medication. So my diabetics who are  
16 supposed to take their Med-form twice a day are  
17 now taking it once a day. And so we have to  
18 finagle, and maybe I'll increase the dose so that  
19 they take it once a day so they'll still get the  
20 coverage. The folks who are on C-pap machines,  
21 when electricity goes, they now have sleep apnea.  
22 They can't use the C-Pap machine, so they increase  
23 their pulmonary hypertension which could lead to  
24 heart failure, which could lead to death. Okay?  
25 These are real, real life issues. These are real

1       life and death issues. It may seem like, oh, it's  
2       just a little increase, it's a little money, but  
3       there are people who are really hanging in the  
4       balance with this, okay? And this is what I want  
5       to speak to. Yes, my business is affected. Yes,  
6       I think Kuman and the others that have spoken on  
7       how their businesses are effected, yes, I fall  
8       into that as well.

9               My purpose for even coming here tonight is  
10       to speak about the patients who have the C-pap,  
11       the oxygen concentrators, the nebulizers for  
12       asthmatics who, if they -- now, there's no A/C,  
13       there's no fans, it's hot, their asthma gets  
14       exacerbated, they need to take the nebulizer but  
15       they can't because there's no power, they don't  
16       have a generator, this is a problem. This is  
17       absolutely crazy, y'all.

18               I moved from Arizona where my house was  
19       about ten times the size of where I live now and I  
20       pay about ten times what I paid in Arizona. I pay  
21       ten times that amount here. I pay an enormous  
22       amount of taxes. I don't mine. I pay taxes.  
23       That's what you are ought to do, but what are the  
24       amenities I'm getting for it? What is the benefit  
25       of me even paying taxes? It's hard to live here.

1 It is difficult to live here, and it is depressing  
2 for some of my patients. They are depressed.  
3 They're counting pennies. This is no way to live.  
4 You know, people want to come to St. Thomas to  
5 say, oh, you live in paradise, but it is pressure  
6 for the natives, and we just need to do better.  
7 We need to do better. I want to make sure I cover  
8 everything.

9 So, they're rationing their medication.  
10 Some medications need to be stored in a cool, dry  
11 place. You know, I'm fortunate to have a  
12 generator in my office, but there are sometimes  
13 when in the middle of examining a patient, power  
14 goes out. And so if I didn't have a generator,  
15 then everything shuts down because I have an  
16 electronic medical record. Everything now is  
17 electronic. And it's just unconscionable to me  
18 that this is what we're getting, that this is what  
19 we have now settled to accept here in the Virgin  
20 Islands, and that is illogical. But to those who  
21 believe the impossible becomes logical, and what  
22 seems to be impossible with changing WAPA for  
23 those of us who will believe, it becomes very  
24 logical. We can change this.

25 HEARING EXAMINER: Andre Malone.



1 MR. MALONE: Andre Malone A-n-d-r-e  
2 M-a-l-o-n-e. And this was a letter I actually  
3 prepared a few weeks ago. So there might be one  
4 or two points that might have been said already or  
5 already been covered, but here we go anyway.

6 HEARING EXAMINER: I didn't hear what you  
7 said last.

8 MR. MALONE: I'm saying this is a letter I  
9 prepared a few weeks ago, so there may be one or  
10 two points that was already covered. And  
11 basically what this is, is a point of view of  
12 regular people. It's not statistical. These are  
13 things that people approach me in the barber --  
14 not the barber but the supermarkets, on the  
15 street, walking down the street, you know. They  
16 call my phone, they send me texts because I work  
17 in government, so they figure I am like their  
18 savior. So I get all of these complaints. So  
19 this is basically the point of view of the regular  
20 guy/woman on the street.

21 The Water and Power Authority was  
22 established in 1964 for the sole purpose of  
23 providing electricity to the residents of the  
24 Virgin Islands.

25 Over the years, it has developed into a

1       poorly run, inefficient entity of the government  
2       used by governors past and present, who knows, but  
3       to place in their political patrons, family and  
4       friends in key positions where competent locally  
5       born and bread educated residents get passed over,  
6       move to the mainland and excel to great heights.  
7       Since the inception of the Authority, the  
8       residents of the Virgin Islands have had to endure  
9       routine erratic power outages and accept this as  
10      normal in the 21st century. After 55 years, the  
11      Authority still cannot provide reliable energy.

12               Successive administrations and WAPA boards  
13      have been promising better but we only get worse.  
14      Two generations of Virgin Islanders have been  
15      entrusting one board after the next to make good  
16      decisions for us, but still we hear of fiscal  
17      woes, borrowing and not repaying to the point that  
18      the Authority, in essence, we, the people, don't  
19      forget that it's us are in a negative bond rating  
20      dilemma and ever rising electricity bills, not to  
21      mention the poor service, right?

22               Currently residents of the Virgin Islands  
23      have to endure recurring impromptu outages that is  
24      causing appliance failure in homes, from microwave  
25      ovens to refrigerators, businesses experiencing

1       air conditioning units being damaged by excessive  
2       power surges, adversely affected computers and  
3       related software as well as large freezers in  
4       supermarkets and stores while paying astronomical  
5       electrical bills.

6               With all the fiscal problems being  
7       reported over the years, it is surprising to see  
8       no form of attrition, layoffs, pay cuts, and other  
9       measures usually undertaken by entities in similar  
10      situations. Instead, we see very high salaries at  
11      the top level. Meanwhile, the linemen have been  
12      working without a contract for 1800 plus days.

13             Since 2015, the Authority has received  
14      over \$1 billion in payments and grants while  
15      reporting just over \$1 billion in debt. I don't  
16      know how that works.

17             The Authority has been avoiding audits for  
18      years amidst the financial blight they have been  
19      portraying over this time period. What is being  
20      hidden from the public, and more importantly, why  
21      is the Authority protective of the financial  
22      records of our, the people, electrical facility.  
23      Since 2015, the Authority has been in receipt of  
24      over \$1 billion in grants and other revenues while  
25      revealing this billion dollar deficit over the

1 same time period.

2 Again, Virgin Islanders have been paying  
3 double for fuel through a base rate, which is  
4 calculated based on the amount of fuel used per  
5 kilowatt hour and the LEAC. So you got to realize  
6 we have been paying double for fuel. So let that  
7 sink for a few minutes.

8 While the Authority burns money like an  
9 uncontrollable forest fire, ratepayers are  
10 experiencing problems with over billing.  
11 Households with less occupants, thus less  
12 electrical usage are receiving bills that are  
13 nearly double the previous months bills. It seems  
14 like the Authority is trying to make up lost  
15 revenues formally paid by hotels and large  
16 businesses not currently online since Irma/Maria.

17 The Authority, charged with energy in this  
18 territory, comes with the responsibility outlined  
19 in the legislation that created it in 1964. It is  
20 not for the aggrandizement of the politically  
21 connected at the peril of the rest of us. The  
22 beginning of the end must be now. This part of  
23 the sanity that we have been following for 55  
24 years is totally ridiculous, people. I was born  
25 in 1964. Here we are, 55-years old, and we're

1 still getting power outages. We're hearing about  
2 unit number this and unit number that. It's  
3 ridiculous. We must seriously explore  
4 alternatives to the current structure and improve  
5 our electrical plant once and for all. The longer  
6 we wait, the worse it will get. Privatization,  
7 public/private partnership or a cooperative are  
8 some of the alternatives that can be explored  
9 immediately before it is too late. Thank you very  
10 much.

11 HEARING EXAMINER: Marguerite Price.

12 MR. PRICE: Good evening, everyone. My  
13 name is Marguerite Price, M-a-r-g-u-e-r-i-t-e,  
14 Price, P-r-i-c-e. Let me start by saying that  
15 when Irma and Maria happened I was in the states.  
16 I was scheduled to come back September the 7th.  
17 Delta canceled my flight because of the storm.  
18 Rescheduled, another impending storm. They kept  
19 canceling due to different things, airport  
20 shutting down. No one can get in or anything.  
21 When I finally got in in November, it was after  
22 Thanksgiving. I had a friend and her husband come  
23 and take me to my apartment. When I opened that  
24 door, I almost had a heart attack. My whole  
25 apartment was destroyed. And to make matters

1 worse, I had to go and stay with them and try to  
2 clean up, and then I get a bill from WAPA for over  
3 \$4,000. I went to PSC. We had a hearing. I had  
4 all the evidence that I was off-island. I had all  
5 my cancellations from the airlines. WAPA told me,  
6 we understand and we sympathize, but according to  
7 the back of your bill, you are held responsible.  
8 I told them, well, you know what, I'm going to go  
9 to court. They said, okay, you want to go to  
10 court, then we are going to stop the hearing and  
11 you're going to be responsible for this whole bill  
12 now. Duress, coerced. But you can't blame the  
13 people that WAPA sent because they're just little  
14 people just like me and you. They're doing their  
15 job. You're going after the big guy who is  
16 forcing them to do what they're too chicken to do.

17 I'm on a payment plan until -- if I  
18 miss -- if I'm a couple days late, they can cut  
19 the bill. So I had to scrape up money. It  
20 doesn't matter that I need money for medication  
21 and for various health reasons. It doesn't matter  
22 that I may not eat anything but cereal one day  
23 because I can't afford it. But you know what, I  
24 don't want anybody to pay a penny for me. Why?  
25 Because I have a strong God that has protected me

1 from all this crap that is going on. To make  
2 matters worse, last month when they started having  
3 all those surges, my refrigerator that's less than  
4 four-years old, gone. Now, where am I going to  
5 get the money to pay for this refrigerator? But  
6 as I said, God never let's you down. I got that  
7 refrigerator. Two weeks later I went to put  
8 something in the microwave and I remember there  
9 was two back to back power outages, microwave,  
10 gone. I had a doctor's appointment, but I needed  
11 -- got a bill couple months ago, \$103. The next  
12 month, \$104. How is that virtually possible? Are  
13 they saying we are going to add another dollar on,  
14 you know? I had initially said everybody in the  
15 WAPA board needs to go. People said, no, because  
16 some of them just got there, but out of the board  
17 members, if I was on the board and I know they  
18 were doing wrong and I know they were corrupt, I  
19 would terminate myself automatically. And I still  
20 say WAPA board needs to go. I don't care who says  
21 I'm wrong. I love the people of the Virgin  
22 Islands. I would continue to fight for you with  
23 every breath that I have and every power because,  
24 as I said, I have a strong God. Thank you.

25 HEARING EXAMINER: Ms. Price, you were

1           talking about the payment plan. Are you still on  
2           a payment plan with WAPA?

3           MS. PRICE: My payment plan doesn't end  
4           until next year at the end of the year 2020, and I  
5           have gone to senators for help. Nobody is  
6           helping.

7           HEARING EXAMINER: If you don't mind, are  
8           you on a fixed income?

9           MR. PRICE: Yes. Yes.

10          HEARING EXAMINER: Thank you. So we've  
11          exhausted the list of individuals that have signed  
12          up to testify. Is there anyone who did not sign  
13          up to testify who's here who wishes to testify?  
14          Come forward.

15          MR. BERTRAND: Good evening all. My name  
16          is Edward C. Bertrand. I'm a former WAPA  
17          employee, worked for WAPA for 25 years. Know it  
18          inside and out. Probably worked with all the  
19          people who are right here now representing WAPA.  
20          They know me well.

21          HEARING EXAMINER: What was your position  
22          WAPA?

23          MR. BERTRAND: I started first as a  
24          draftsman and I left as an engineer tech or what  
25          you call a staking engineer.



1 HEARING EXAMINER: Okay.

2 MR. BERTRAND: Edward Bertrand. A lot of  
3 people know me applying for power. I was probably  
4 the first person that you saw. Came to your  
5 house, understood how to connect you and try to  
6 find the cheapest way to get you connected.

7 As you're saying, a lot of people here  
8 have talked about the problems and the problems  
9 with WAPA and we really have to, like the one  
10 gentleman talked about, thinking of the box.  
11 Since I've left WAPA, that's been my goal. That's  
12 been my mission. I'm also on a fixed income. I  
13 have a 92-year old mother, fixed income. I mean,  
14 the bills are astronomical. I don't need to  
15 reiterate the same thing everybody else has said.  
16 It is finding solutions, and it doesn't take a  
17 rocket scientist. We have many engineers that  
18 were sent away on scholarships by WAPA, came back,  
19 hopefully to have applied their knowledge to WAPA.  
20 Well, it seems as though it wasn't their  
21 knowledge. It seems as though they have ideas of  
22 bringing everybody else in and sticking to the  
23 same old five-year, ten-year plan that WAPA has  
24 always had, privatize. The people have heard this  
25 many a times, we need to privatize. You look at

1       that, but I'll tell you this. I woke up this  
2       morning, the American flag was flying. As long as  
3       I know, America is a capitalist country. You  
4       can't tell a person what to charge for a potato.  
5       So once you've privatized, know that a private  
6       business, you can't tell him what to charge you.  
7       So know who is really calling the shots now that  
8       they are locked into contracts that they really  
9       didn't look at. They had somebody else look at  
10      it. It looks good. He's a private person that  
11      came in by consulting. Regardless, I get paid.  
12      They know that. They're intelligent brothers. I  
13      don't say they're not, but the carrot waived in  
14      front of them and they all fell for it. They are  
15      well paid, are they not? Okay. So, do you not  
16      think that they are here singing for their supper?  
17      So need we not talk with them. They need to come  
18      with real solutions. I personally, from before I  
19      left WAPA, I brought them a real solution. I  
20      didn't come with it correctly because I was  
21      introduced to it through some other people. Came  
22      out of Puerto Rico. The board here at PSC knows  
23      of this project. Came in here for like two years  
24      really on a strong basis. It kind of fell through  
25      based on a financial issue, but the technology was

1 sound. It's a baseload system, a system that  
2 handles baseload. They don't talk about baseload.  
3 They just talk about load. It came with solar.  
4 Solar didn't work. Why? They did not think it  
5 through. It needed to have a battery system,  
6 something that would store power. Sun doesn't  
7 shine at night. Now you're coming with wind. Go  
8 down to have Viequez and ask them the problems  
9 that they have with their wind farm down there.  
10 You need to think about where you live. Things  
11 that sometimes cost more than they could provide.  
12 You need to think out the box such as the  
13 gentleman said.

14 I'm coming back with my project. It's  
15 called waste to energy, and I'm coming in a  
16 different form. Not to really be discussed at  
17 this particular time but I'm coming at it full  
18 throttle and I'm letting you all know I'm going to  
19 come at half of what they're charging now at a  
20 fixed rate, not to fluctuate based on fossil fuel  
21 which we are all dependent upon at this time. If  
22 it isn't propane, it is oil. If it isn't oil,  
23 it's gas. Do we produce any of that in the Virgin  
24 Islands?

25 AUDIENCE: No.

1           THE WITNESS: Then how can it be cheaper  
2           and it's fluctuating on the fuel market? Every  
3           day it's traded. Do you think they're ever going  
4           to come down to a cheaper rate knowing that you  
5           are dependent upon it? Can you bite the hand?  
6           No. So what are you going to do? You got to  
7           think out the box. Use what you got. Well, I'm  
8           gonna use waste to energy. One thing we got is a  
9           lot of waste around here, okay? And that is just  
10          the beginning of looking at how we are going to  
11          attack the fossil fuel or I should say the  
12          renewable energy systems that are available to us.  
13          We're not reinventing the wheel. The wheel is  
14          there. We just need to make the wheel better, and  
15          we have intelligent people here. There are many  
16          people I know that I've worked with in that  
17          Authority that have the smarts and the know how.  
18          But as we say, the upper echelon kept them from  
19          really coming forward with that, and they waived  
20          the carrot in front of them and they went for it  
21          and this is what we got. When you start wrong --  
22          I should say when you plan to fail, you plan to  
23          fail. You didn't fail to plan.

24                HEARING EXAMINER: Mr. Payne, I can give  
25          you about three more minutes.

1 MR. PAYNE: That's okay.

2 HEARING EXAMINER: Okay. So that  
3 concludes the public hearing. I thank everyone  
4 for attending, those who testified and even those  
5 who did not testify. Please travel safely to your  
6 home and have a good rest of the evening.

7 [Public Hearing adjourned at 7:15 p.m.]

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Desiree D. Hill, Registered Merit Reporter,  
do hereby certify that the above-named meeting was  
taken by me by machine shorthand and represents the  
official transcript of said meeting; and that said  
transcription is true and correct.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my  
hand.

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Desiree D. Hill, RMR